

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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GRETCHEN.

By the Author of "Dame Durden," "My Lord Conceit,"
"Darby and Joan," "Corinna," etc.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER VI. CONTRASTS.

ADRIAN LYLE found that delicate-scented note awaiting him, when he came home from a round of parish duties to his midday meal.

The clear, graceful writing, the subtle, faint perfume, brought its writer before him with almost startling distinctness. He remembered the exquisite face; the dark, mocking eyes; the sweet, vibrating voice; and thought to himself, "She is Gretchen's rival, and a dangerous one. I must watch how matters go between herself and Kenyon."

With that end and purpose he found himself in the beautiful, old, oak-panelled dining-room that night, one among a very small circle of guests who had arrived that day at the Abbey.

Keenly as he watched, he could detect no signs of secret understanding between Neale and his cousin. Lovely as a dream, and bewildering as a puzzle, Alexis Kenyon aroused his interest and enchaind his attention, almost against his will. She was so graceful, so animated, so audacious, so cool, so changeful in speech and expression, that she certainly made a picture of original womanhood, baffling and entertaining him at one and the same moment.

There were two other ladies of the party—one young and lovely, one middle-aged and clever. A celebrated statesman; a young and talented artist, who had leaped at one bound to fame and success; and a cynical and somewhat eccentric author, for whose works Alexis

had a great admiration; completed the party.

The party was brilliant and well assorted; but Adrian Lyle noticed that one and all paid involuntary homage to the young hostess; that her keen and graceful wit, and delicate ironies kept the ball of conversation flying with startling and bewildering rapidity. He did not wonder that her father was proud of her; that the devotion and worship of his kindly nature were so self-evident and so excuseable. But it seemed to him that Kenyon displayed an almost nervous horror of his clever cousin. He was silent, absent, uncomfortable. He spoke but seldom, and never by any chance took part in the brilliant dialogue that sparkled round the flower-laden table.

Adrian Lyle himself was rather a listener to, than a participator in, the conversation. He thought his lovely young hostess charming, as a woman of the world; further than that his thoughts did not go at present.

He would have been surprised had he known that those brilliant eyes of hers noted every shade of expression on his face; that she could have described the shape of his head, the broad, sweeping wave of hair tossed so carelessly back from the grave and kindly brow, the whole power and strength and gentleness of the face that was at once so impressive and attractive.

Almost against her will, Alexis Kenyon was conscious of noticing and remembering these things; of feeling that this man's presence had brought a new element of interest into her spoilt, capricious life. That sense of power and strength, of firm will and gentle nature which Adrian Lyle conveyed, was to her something novel and, as yet, attractive. She could not understand why, or

how, he conveyed all this to her. Their acquaintance had been brief; they had scarcely exchanged a dozen sentences to-night; but Adrian Lyle's individuality stamped all he said, and lingered in her memory long after wittier and more brilliant words had faded into forgetfulness.

"He does not like me," she thought to herself, as she rose from the table at last. "I wonder why."

A little sense of amusement crept into her heart, and something, too, that was very like pique and annoyance. It was so unusual, so surprising to find herself no more than any other woman in the eyes of a man, and a man, too, in whom she had condescended to feel interest.

The great drawing-room was dimly lit by rose-shaded lamps. The windows were open on the terrace. The pretty girl, who was a skilful musician, went up to the open piano and began playing a dreamy, tender melody of Schubert's. Her aunt, Lady Breresford, who was one of Alexis Kenyon's rare favourites, seated herself beside her young hostess near the window.

"Who is your new friend?" she asked. "Clerical, is he not?"

"Yes," said Alexis; "a curate. He does not look like one, though."

"No," said Lady Breresford. "He has an air of great dignity. He impresses one with a sense of power that is withheld for occasion, so it seems to me."

"Perhaps," said Alexis coolly, "the occasion will arise. Bishops have been curates once."

"It is a new element for you to introduce," remarked Lady Breresford. "You have always professed dislike for Church dignitaries."

"But he is not a dignitary—yet," she answered, and gave a little yawn, and looked out at the clear June stars with a bored and somewhat listless expression. "I think I will go out on the terrace," she said, rising. "Will you come?"

"Thank you, no," laughed the elder lady. "I am beyond the age of moonlight and illusions, and I see no use in courting neuralgia. I will remain here, and listen to Fay."

"Fay's music is delightful," said Alexis, standing midway between the window and the terrace on which it opened, while she wound a delicate lace scarf round her shoulders. "But I can hear it quite as well here, and I do not suffer from neuralgia."

"Nor from anything else," said Lady Breresford, looking somewhat curiously at the delicate face that was as perfect as a cameo in the moonlight. "Not even a heartache."

Alexis laughed.

"No, that least of all. I can't imagine such a thing. I believe it is a poetic nickname for boredom, spite, or indigestion."

"I hope," said Lady Breresford, "you may never find it anything else. You have caused it often enough to fear retribution."

Alexis only smiled, and moved slowly away. As she did so, the door opened and the gentlemen entered. It did not in any way surprise Lady Breresford that one and all looked round the room, as if in search of someone whose absence made itself instantly apparent.

She left her seat, and laughed good-humouredly:

"Miss Kenyon is out on the terrace," she said, and watched the general movement towards the window with evident amusement. "What is it she does to them?" she thought. "She never cares. Perhaps it is just that."

Her niece left the piano and approached. Neale Kenyon suggested that they should follow the general exodus, and she assented. Sir Roy and Lady Breresford alone remained in the drawing-room.

The group without met, spoke, and separated into twos and threes. It surprised Adrian Lyle somewhat to find himself walking along beside the spoilt and wilful beauty, nor was he quite aware how it came about.

"What a lovely night!" he said, pausing involuntarily under the white and radiant moonlight, which showed the whole extent of the gardens and park. "I don't wonder at your coming out here. It seems a sin to sit indoors."

"Yes," she said. "One sacrifices a great deal to conventional duties. It is very foolish."

"This is a perfect place," said Adrian Lyle, his eyes wandering from point to point of the beautiful grounds. "You ought to be happy as its mistress."

"Do you think I hold it 'par droit du roi'?" she asked, laughing. "I assure you I do not—only by a very insecure tenure; indeed, I have often wondered my father never married again. He might do so still."

"When he is so entirely devoted to you? I scarcely think it."

"I don't believe in entire devotion," she said. "It is one of those phrases one uses because they sound well; but it conveys a great deal more than is correct."

"You believe in very few things, I fancy," said Adrian Lyle, looking gravely and critically at the pale, lovely face, to which the moonlight lent additional purity and beauty.

"Very few," she agreed tranquilly. "I have proved their worth too often."

"A melancholy truth. Perhaps you judge too rapidly and too hardly."

"I judge," she said, "as I find things and—persons. Of course, one can imagine them charming, if one wishes. I like to look beneath the surface."

"So do I," he said, smiling involuntarily. "And have you found nothing, and no one to stand that test?"

"As yet, no. I believe there is no such thing as a perfectly sincere person in the world."

"That is a sweeping accusation," he said calmly. "Sincerity, you know is not always flattering, and probably you have often turned aside the blunt edge of a truth by your own fascination. Do you expect everyone to say what they think? I fear society would not turn on such smoothly oiled hinges if that were the case."

"Society!" she echoed scornfully. "Oh, how sick I am of the word! It has sounded in my ears since I could walk alone. Sometimes, I think I will leave the world altogether and enter a convent."

"I would not," he said, "were I you. The leaven of your discontent would affect a wider circle than it touches at present, and perhaps do more harm."

"Do you mean," she asked quickly, "that the fault lies with me?"

"I mean," he answered gently, yet rebukingly, "that when there is so much real sorrow, poverty, distress, and want in this poor work-a-day world of ours, it seems rather foolish to quarrel with an existence so perfectly conducive to happiness and content as yours might be."

"Might be? Yes. I have all the attributes of happiness, I know; but the reality—well, I have either no capacity to grasp it, or else it has a wider meaning than social success, a well-arranged household, or more admiration than is perhaps good for a woman. You see I am very frank. Can you read the secret of my discontent?"

"I should imagine it lies with yourself."

"I think so too, but that does not solve the problem of its existence. I have everything—therefore I am content with nothing. Can you suggest a remedy?"

"It would be a harsh one," he said, "and one that you would feel little inclined to follow. I should say, be more true to the natural instincts of womanhood; give your feelings more play, and your intellect less; look into the sufferings and necessities of humanity from a personal, not an abstract point of view; try to feel, instead of to analyse; expect less, and give more. I think you may be more disturbed, but you will certainly be less dissatisfied."

"To become that," she said coldly, "you would have to alter my whole nature; then I should cease to be myself, and it would not matter very much if I were happier or more contented. You cannot deny that life is intensely monotonous and extremely ill-balanced; it has either a surfeit of sweets or sours: the one wearies, the other hardens. I suppose weariness is the easier burden of the two."

"Miss Kenyon," said Adrian Lyle, almost severely, "your sophistries may be very clear and sound very pretty to men and women of the world, but to me they ring hollow, as base coinage would. I don't know the cant of society, I don't wish to know it; but when a woman, young, beautiful, clever, and beloved, tells me that she is utterly dissatisfied with her lot, and utterly unable to find one good or true note in the vast music of humanity, she tells me a thing which I cannot believe, and for which I can give her no sympathy. The fault lies in herself, to my thinking, not in the world that she blames."

For a moment, a sense of outrage, of indignation, of intense and aroused pride held Alexis Kenyon utterly speechless. Never had anyone dared to so arraign her actions, or speak such scathing rebuke. The very truth of Adrian Lyle's words cut through the threads of her cynical philosophy like a sword that severs flesh and bone. A sense of utter worthlessness, a bitter, shame-faced humility, shook her serene and scornful nature, and for one hateful moment bowed her to the dust before the first man who had dared to tell her the truth.

Then the feeling passed. Her imperious blood took fire. Wounded and incensed, yet too proud to show how deeply his words had cut, she turned her great luminous eyes upon Adrian Lyle's face.

"You are certainly sincere," she said.

"No doubt the fault does lie with me; but, like most of your profession, you are quicker to blame than to suggest a remedy."

"In your case," he said, "I should not be so bold, though it lies almost at your door, would you condescend to seek it."

"I understand," she said, with her little chill smile, "you would like me to play Lady Bountiful—become ministering angel to the parish by way of making myself acquainted with real sorrow and necessities. I have tried it, and I assure you it did not interest me in the least. Sorrow is very egotistic, and necessity very in-odorous. I can't say they taught me any higher truths."

He looked at her with something that was almost scorn in his grand grey eyes. How mean, how pitiful, how insignificant she was in those eyes at that moment, even she felt apparent.

What he might have said she never knew, for at that instant Neale Kenyon and his pretty companion paused beside them. The young man had noted the long tête-à-tête, and had grown more and more uncomfortable at its duration.

"Are you preaching a sermon, Lyle?" he asked, with a little uneasy glance at his cousin's grave face and flashing eyes; "or trying to convert Alexis? Don't. It's time wasted, and she'll never be grateful for the attempt."

"I am not making it," said Adrian Lyle, calmly. "We have been discussing generalities."

"Let us go in and have some music," suggested Neale. "The dew is falling, and it grows chilly."

Instinctively he approached his cousin, leaving Adrian Lyle beside pretty Fay Breresford.

"Come in and sing, won't you?" he asked persuasively. "You haven't once done so since I came back."

She took his offered arm. He thought she looked strangely pale and cold in the clear moon-rays.

"Yes, I will sing," she said with such meek acquiescence that her cousin was startled.

He did not know how fast her heart was throbbing, what a tumult of anger and futile disdain was thrilling in those beating pulses.

"Perhaps that will move him," she thought, for she had proved again and again the magic of a voice trained to perfection.

She sang that night as she seldom or never sang, for it rarely happened that she desired to please any special listener. Yet this listener was unmoved, to all appearance, and his courteous thanks were as cold as thanks could be.

"You do everything well," he said, "when you take the trouble."

She looked at him. A faint flush wavered over her fair face, her great eyes were brilliant as stars.

"There is not much trouble about that," she said, glancing at the music she still held. "And I wonder you do not say it is only another display for the purpose of gratifying vanity."

When she had said the words she was sorry. They displayed pique, and she would not for worlds have him think that anything he had said had wounded her.

He smiled a little.

"Some successes," he said, "are never monotonous. A talent such as you possess is as capable of giving pleasure to others, as of gratifying yourself."

"Are you fond of music?" she asked suddenly.

His eyes flashed.

"I love it," he said. "It is my one weakness—if I may call it so."

"I thought you did not possess even one," she said tranquilly. "May I ask if you sing also?"

He looked a little disturbed.

"Yes, I sing," he said; "but not in drawing-rooms, or to fashionable audiences, and not ballads."

"I never supposed so," she said, as she tossed her song down on the piano. Then looking softly at him she said: "Will you favour me—not the audience? They are going to play cards. I should like to hear you."

For a moment he hesitated.

"I have not sung for a long time," he said at last, "and I have no music. The excuses sound conventional, I know; but they are quite true. Still, if you wish—"

"I do wish it very much," she said, leading the way to the piano. "Will you accompany yourself?"

"If you will allow me," he said; and he took his seat at the instrument, while the group at the further end of the room drew together round the card-table.

She seated herself on a low chair, a little to one side of him, but where she could see his face. What she expected she hardly knew, only that it seemed to her

that the man could do nothing by halves—nothing imperfectly.

He struck a few chords almost at random. Then his voice rang out—clear, full, sonorous—in the “*Salutaris Hostia*” of a Mass he had heard and learnt in Rome.

The card-players dropped their cards in amazement, and turned as by common consent towards the singer. Alexis herself sat there quite still—scarcely breathing. She had never heard such a voice. It swept over her senses like a charm, rising in wonderful diapason clearer, and sweeter, and higher, perfect in melody and enunciation—seeming to breathe all that was most lofty and divine in the longingsoul to that dim and far-off Being it worshipped. Then slowly, softly, reluctantly, the rich, soft notes died one by one away—the last chord echoed on the breathless silence.

He rose. For a second their eyes met, and in that second it seemed to her that all the littleness, all the arrogance, the petty vanities and selfishness of her life faced her, and held her shamed and silent.

Then something that was base and cruel leapt into her heart, and set her better feelings in savage and furious revolt.

Why should this man of all men make her feel so small and so contemptible? Even that one talent on which she prided herself, and which he had praised, he had swept into insignificance now. She rose, and something hard and defiant was in her face as she said coldly: “Your singing, Mr. Lyle, is too perfect for my poor thanks. I have never heard such a voice—off the stage.”

He bowed gravely and turned away. Neale Kenyon was close beside him.

“How magnificently you sing!” he exclaimed eagerly. “I have never heard anything like it—never since I was in Venice. Do you remember—?”

He stopped abruptly and crimsoned to the roots of his hair. Adrian Lyle gave him a warning look. His own face grew pale and disturbed. Alexis noted the exchange of glances—the sudden gravity and coldness of Adrian Lyle’s face.

“There is some mystery about that friendship,” she thought to herself. “It shall go hard with them if ever I find it out.”

THE FOLK-LORE OF MARRIAGE.

IN FOUR PARTS. PART IV.

STILL continuing the research after punishments awarded to those who failed

to make the best of affairs of this life, it will be found that in Leicester, in common with many other places, they were ducked in the river; and there is still preserved in the museum of that town a “cucking chair,” in which these wives were seated while undergoing the punishment. Rough music to the scolds was the custom of some villages. So recently as 1860, at a village in the South of England, when a man was shut out of his house by a termagant wife, the boys and young men dressed up an effigy of the woman, imprisoned it in the pound for a time, and then burned it before her door.

Brand, in his “History of Newcastle-upon-Tyne,” states that in the time of the Commonwealth scolds were punished with the “brank.” Plot, also, in his “History of Staffordshire,” describes the “brank” as having been used at Walsall and Newcastle-under-Lyme. In the museum at Oxford one of these curious articles is now exhibited in an excellent state of preservation; and from the number of instances found of them, they must have been in common use, although there is very little mention made of them in any law book. The Ashton parish “brank” is still at the parish offices. This “brank” was a sugar-loaf-shaped cap, made of iron hooping, with a cross at the top, and a flat piece projecting inwards to lay upon the tongue. It was put upon the heads of scolds, padlocked behind, and a string annexed by which a man led them through the town. This form of punishment appears more recent than the “cucking stool.” The whirlingig was formerly a very common punishment for trifling offences by sutlers, brawling women, and such offenders—a kind of circular wooden cage turning on a pivot, and when set in motion whirled round with such amazing velocity that the delinquent soon became extremely sick.

An old writer says of the same punishment: “The way of punishing scolding women is pleasant enough. They fasten an arm-chair to the end of two beams, twelve to fifteen feet long, and parallel to each other, so that these two pieces of wood, with their two ends, embrace the chair, which hangs between them upon a sort of axle; by which means it plays freely, and always remains in the natural horizontal position in which a chair should be, that a person may sit conveniently in it whether you raise it up or let it down. They set up a post upon the bank of a pond or river, and over this pond they lay almost ‘in

equilibrio' the two pieces of wood, at one end of which the chair hangs just over the water; they place the woman in this chair, and so plunge her into the water as often as the sentence directs, in order to cool her immoderate heat."

Leaving punishments and penalties for a time, I find that it is a custom, and a very good one too, among certain tribes in Siberia, that, when a woman is married, she must prepare the wedding dinner with her own hands. To this feast all the relations and friends, both of her own family and of that of the bridegroom, are invited. If the viands are well cooked, her credit as a good housewife is established; but if the dishes are badly prepared, she is disgraced for ever. The result is that a Siberian wife is generally a good housekeeper.

Something akin to this custom was once formerly practised in rural places. Formerly when the process of pancake-making was commenced in a household—usually at about eleven o'clock—the domestics of the place assembled to engage in the art of "tossing the pancake," as the idea was entertained that no woman was qualified for the connubial state without being skilled in the art.

A parliamentary decree under Louis the Fifteenth of France solemnly enacts "that any female person found guilty of enticing any of His Majesty's male subjects into the bonds of matrimony by means of red and white paint, perfumes, essences, artificial teeth, false hair, high-heeled shoes, etc., shall be indicted for witchcraft, and declared unfit for marriage."

One of the laws of Connecticut formerly decreed that "no man shall court a maid in person or by letter without first obtaining consent of her parents. Five pounds penalty for the first offence; ten pounds for the second; and for the third, imprisonment during the pleasure of the Court."

In our own country, several centuries back, every woman marrying was to pay to the King, if a widow, twenty shillings; if a maid, ten shillings.

Amongst ecclesiastical punishments meted out to married men and women at the ancient Archdeacons' Court, we find one man bringing judgement upon himself for "marieing his wife in their parish church in her mask;" and another for "that the day he was married he dyd blowe oute the lightes about the altar and wolde suffer no lightes to bourne." A third was punished for "not treating his wife with affecioun;"

and another "for cheening his wife to a post and slandering his neighbours." A woman was dealt with for "comynge to be churched without kercher, midwife, or wyves," or not "as other honest women; but comynge in her hatt, and a quarter about her neck."

Madame Greville tells us that in Russia women are not regarded as the equals of men. "The peasant," she says, "expects his wife to plough, to harvest, to work like a beast of burden. This would be comparatively nothing if they were well treated and loved. Their husbands do love them, but in a peculiar fashion. For the first two or three days after the wedding, things go on very well, that is, while the families are exchanging their visits. After that, the husband beats his wife; and, if he does not beat her, she thinks it is because he does not love her." In support of this, Madame Greville quotes the following instance: "Once, when I was there, a girl who had been married only ten days came to me with her mother and begged me to use my influence with the newly-made husband. They wanted me to make him beat the girl, according to her situation as a wife. It was a long time before I understood the reason. I found that it was founded on jealousy. If a husband is not jealous, he does not beat his wife; and if he is not jealous, he does not love her."

In olden times there was a popular notion termed "marrying to save life"—that is to say, it was believed that a woman, by marrying a man under the gallows tree, would save him from execution. The origin of the belief is lost completely. Barrington, in his "Observations on the more Ancient Statutes," says: "This vulgar error probably arose from a wife having brought an appeal against the murderer of her husband, who, afterwards repenting the prosecution of her lover, not only forgave the offence, but was willing to marry the apeller." In Chastelain's "*Chronique des Ducs de Bourgogne*," (1837), it is recorded that in 1468 "Hernoul, son of John de la Hamaide, lord of Haudion and Main, Vault, cruelly murdered a citizen because a canon, the brother of the murdered man, had given an adverse decision on a disputed point at the game of tennis. Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, caused Hernoul to be arrested, and swore that he should die for his crime. In spite of the most powerful intercessions, Charles adhered to his resolution, and at the time when Bruges was

crowded with visitors to witness the arrival of Margaret of York, sister to our Edward the Fourth, Hernoul was led out to be executed." Chastellain, a contemporary and an eye-witness of this exciting scene, informs us that the criminal was "bound on a cart with cords, and dressed as richly as if he were going to a wedding. The cart was followed by a great crowd, and numbers of women who, to save his life, besought and entreated that they might have him in marriage." Hernoul was, however, hanged in due course.

In a little village in Somerset, the following curious tradition is told respecting the origin of a well-known Druidical monument existing there, and consisting of four groups of stones, which, when complete, formed two circles. Many hundred years ago, on a Saturday evening, a newly-married couple, with their relatives and friends, met on the spot now covered by these ruins to celebrate their nuptials. Here they feasted and danced right merrily until the clock tolled the hour of midnight, when the piper (a pious man) refused to play any longer. This was much against the wish of the guests, and so exasperated the bride, who was fond of dancing, that she swore with an oath that she would not be balked in her enjoyment by a beggarly piper, but would find a substitute, if she went to the lower regions to fetch one. She had scarcely uttered the words when a venerable old man with a long beard made his appearance, and, having listened to their request, proffered his services, which were right gladly accepted. The old gentleman, who was none other than the arch fiend himself, having taken the seat vacated by the godly piper, commenced playing a slow and solemn air which, on the guests remonstrating, he changed into one more lively and rapid. The company now began to dance, but soon found themselves impelled round the performer so rapidly and mysteriously that they would all fain have rested. But when they tried to retire, they found to their consternation that they were moving faster and faster round their diabolical musician, who had now resumed his original shape. Their cries for mercy were unheeded, until the first glimmering of day warned the fiend that he must depart. With such rapidity had they moved that the gay and sportive assembly were now reduced to a ghostly troop of skeletons. "I leave you," said the fiend, "a monument of my power and your wickedness to the end of time." So saying, he vanished.

The following incident connected with marriage is so unusual that it seems well worthy of record: Thomas Coke, first Earl of Leicester, married his first wife on October the fifth, 1775; his son, the present Earl, married his second wife on August the twenty-sixth, 1875. There was thus an interval of one hundred years between the one and the other event. It is extremely doubtful if such another incident has occurred—certainly not in the Peerage.

I must now conclude these articles with a short notice of a horrible superstition which prevailed to a considerable extent in India.

Formerly Hindoo women, on the death of their husbands, performed what was known as "suttee"—that is, they immolated themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands, and so secured a happy entrance into the region of the blest. This barbaric custom was encouraged by the priests, and was a regular occurrence until the conquest of India by the English, since which time only few cases of suttee have taken place. When it is known that the sacrifice is contemplated, the authorities step in promptly and rescue the unfortunate fanatic from the untimely death which superstition and priestcraft prompt her to seek.

Mr. Edwin Arnold, in his letters on "India Revisited," says: "Parvati's Hill (Poona), with the renowned temple on its summit, overlooks the 'Diamond Garden.' A long and winding flight of spacious stairs leads up to it, so gradual that mounted elephants can quite easily carry visitors or pilgrims to the platform of the goddess. Half way up the ascent is seen a stone memorial of a Sati (suttee), with the usual footmarks engraved, which show that a Hindoo widow here immolated herself. The bright-eyed Brahmin lad who conducts us points to the spot with pride, and is astonished to learn, when he speaks half-regretfully of the abolition of this antique rite of self-sacrifice, that it was never in any way common in India, the instances of Sati not amounting in any one year to more than eight or nine hundred. The unselfish and perfect love which could make a woman forego life for her husband, was never so particularly common, that, even in India, every city furnished a Hindoo Alcestis once or twice a week, as seems occasionally supposed.

"Here however, was, at any rate, a place where one such great-hearted wife—believing the Shastras which promise union in

heaven with the dead man, and as many lakhs of happy years with him as there are hairs upon the widow's head—here was the spot where some Hirrabaee or Gungabaee gave her gentle life to the flames, undeterred by heaped-up wood and lighted torches, unrestrained by the beauty of this Deccan prospect, which stretches, fair and fertile, to Sivaji's distant fortress peaks. It was not very wrong, let us hope, to lay a flower upon the carved stone which recorded when the Sati, the "Excellent One," had last set her fearless foot upon this earth of selfish hearts and timid beliefs. The words in the "Hito Padesa" came vividly to my mind :

When the Hindoo wife, embracing tenderly her husband dead,
Mounts the funeral pyre beside him, as it were a bridal bed;
Though his sins were twenty thousand, twenty thousand times o'ertold,
She should bring his soul to Swarga, for that love so strong and bold."

PASSION WEEK IN VIENNA.

WHY is Vienna called the wickedest city in the world? Did its inhabitants, in far-back ages, perpetrate some deed of unparalleled atrocity, or is it to the envious malice of enemies that it owes its opprobrious title?

When I was staying there, I often used to ask this question, for if the name of the city had been the gay, the hospitable, the beautiful, the musical, I could have understood it; but why the wicked? The Viennese themselves do not seem to know, and, what is more, they do not seem to care. One of them assured me, with a shrug of the shoulders, there must be in everything a superlative, so in wickedness too, and why should not Vienna bear the palm? I must confess, however, that I noticed no signs of rampant wickedness in the Austrian capital; on the contrary, it appeared to me the brightest and happiest town I had ever seen.

I suppose the Viennese do work sometimes, but where or when I could never discover. The Ring, an immense boulevard which completely surrounds the city, is, from early morning until late at night, filled with a gay, chattering crowd—such a crowd, too, as can be seen nowhere else in Europe. There the Tyrolean looks at you, from under his broad-brimmed hat, with those large, dark eyes which seem fraught with untold misery. By his side may be walking a Bohemian; an honest,

steady-going citizen in reality, though fiction chooses to despoil him of his virtues. Judging by his soft, cooing dialect, you might be led to think he was always relating some piteous, heart-breaking tale; even his laughter is tinged with melancholy. Then little knots of Hungarian soldiers, glittering in silver and pale blue, wander up and down, taking the whole world into their confidence as their shrill voices ring through the air; whilst Greeks and Croats, Transylvanians and Bosnians, all in native dress, with those subtle touches of brilliant colouring which Eastern nations seem intuitively to know when and how to use, lounge about in picturesque groups, which stand out in bold relief from the tall, grey buildings around.

Life in Vienna is as brilliant and varied as the dress of its natives. One amusement follows another with a never-ending rapidity. Nor is pleasure-hunting confined to one class or age; rich and poor, young and old, throw themselves into it with a hearty vigour which is most delightful; the very babies in the street, as if moved by some common impulse, dance all day.

I once happened to be in Vienna in February, and, as Easter fell early that year, remembering that I was in a Roman Catholic country, I was prepared to find that the whirl of gaiety, in which we were living, would be brought to a stand-still by Lent. But, to my surprise, far from this being the case, balls, theatricals, concerts, and every form of amusement were more numerous and brilliant than ever. The Sunday before Easter Day was a kind of gala at the opera, and up to that time there had been no break in the rush of dissipation. That night, however, when we were going to bed, I noticed a strange, wistful look in the face of my hostess, for which I was at a loss to account; and the next morning when I came down to breakfast, I saw a change so startling that, for a moment, I could scarcely believe my eyes. My hostess, whom I had never known to appear before eleven, was at the head of her table, punctual to the moment for the nine o'clock breakfast. But was it really she? Where were the thousand little curls, ends of ribbon, flutters of lace, with which she was wont to be adorned? She, the most fashionable and elegant of ladies, appeared to have undergone some strange transformation; for, sitting there, she was for all the world like the Lady Abbess of some convent. Her hair was plainly

brushed behind her ears without a sign of ripple or curl; a black dress, of the simplest description, hung straight to her feet; chains, earrings, brooches, had all vanished; a linen collar and a huge chaplet were the only attempts at ornamentation. The very expression of her face, too, was changed. A sort of preternatural solemnity seemed suddenly to have descended upon her. Nor was it upon her alone: her husband, although the alterations in his dress were necessarily less apparent, had undoubtedly undergone some subtle change since the previous night. Nay, the very servants were metamorphosed, and moved about in silent gloom, as if some awful fate either had overtaken them, or were just on the point of doing so. There was a lack of food, too, on the table; all the tempting little French dishes were gone, and in their place was a loaf of bread. I could not imagine what it all meant, but, as my friends said nothing, I felt it would be indelicate to intrude upon their sorrow. At length, feeling the silence too oppressive to be endured, I enquired if we were going to the theatre that night. If I had enquired whether we were going to commit murder, they could not have looked more horror-stricken.

"Oh, no; how could we?" they both exclaimed.

More mystified than ever, I looked from one to the other, and, in sheer despair, asked, "Why not?"

"We never indulge in worldly frivolities during Passion Week," was the reply, given in a compassionately reproachful tone, such as I can imagine Miss Ophelia might have used when remonstrating with Topsy.

My friends spoke the truth. "Indulge in worldly frivolities!" I should think not. Indulgence of any kind would be the last thing to be associated in my mind with the week that followed.

But, as I soon discovered, the whole of the Viennese, as well as ourselves, had changed their manner of life. Not a visitor approached the house; if, in the street, you saw anyone whom you knew, he or she hurried past without a word, evidently bent upon some errand of charity. Everyone had cast aside feathers and plumes, and flitted about in mourning garments, with a penitential expression of face. Clearly the Viennese held with the text, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;" for I noticed that those who had valed most vigorously were the most diligent in their devotions. In

fact, it was as if some vast revival of religious fervour had suddenly seized the whole population. Involuntarily I thought of the days of Peter the Hermit, or Savonarola, so completely did the people seem to be under the influence of an all-powerful emotion.

In other days I had spent hours wandering about in the fine old Cathedral and the innumerable churches of which Vienna boasts, and it was a rare chance if I had not found them empty. On Sundays, even, you might often have counted the congregation on your fingers; but now all that was changed. Every church was crowded. Service succeeded service without intermission, and yet there never seemed to be enough. Not only was the Cathedral all day, from early morning till late at night, packed with people as closely as it would hold, but a crowd surrounded the door, waiting to take the place of those who were inside.

Numbers of Father Confessors were sent up from the country, but even then the supply was far from equalling the demand. People, who for months before had never entered a church, must now confess every day. It was an hour of triumph for the priests, and they used it to the full. Some of the sermons I heard at that time were perfect masterpieces of fierce invective. One of the preachers—a Trappist, I think—a tall, gaunt, haggard man, with shaggy, grey locks and wild-looking eyes, might have been an Elijah addressing Jezebel's Court, with such unflinching boldness did he hurl reproaches at his hearers. And they literally grovelled before him. Courtiers, Ministers, officers, the greatest aristocrats in the world, hung upon his words as if he had been a god; and the more roughly he treated them, the more popular he became.

For the beggars this was of course a time of rich harvest; they had only to sit still, and coins, for which they scarcely deigned to thank the giver, were hurled down upon them. The blind, the halt, and the lame were hunted up and loaded with gifts. It was amusing to see how completely these people fell in with the spirit of the affair, and acted up to their parts. Everything was inverted—it was the beggars who kindly condescended to accept what was given, whilst the rich were properly grateful for being allowed to give.

The Court takes the lead in all these demonstrations of piety. The Emperor and the Empress on Holy Thursday kneel

down, and whilst the former washes the feet of twelve old men, the latter renders the same service to twelve old women. Of course, after that, the courtiers feel that no work can be lowly and humiliating enough.

By the end of the week, most Viennese present a rather ghastly spectacle. Fasting with them, as I can bear witness, is no empty form; they go in for that, as for everything else, with all their hearts and souls. The more frivolous they have been for the rest of the year, the more they are bent upon enduring unparalleled torture during this week. Not only is the food provided simple, and indeed almost coarse as to quality, but it is strictly limited as to quantity; the result being that, in a few days, the more delicate among the Viennese are in a state of prostration. We all know the piteous looks of the poor—of those who in their lives have scarcely known what it was to have sufficient food—but this expression is quite different from that of people who, after revelling in every luxury, suddenly begin to practise austerities. These seem to go down at once, physically and mentally—spiritually, of course, they are supposed to develop unheard-of strength—their flesh hangs upon them loosely, and their eyes become almost wolfish in their eager brightness. It is quite painful to see some of them.

From Monday morning to Saturday night, fasting, penances, and austerities of every kind, went on steadily increasing in severity. At first, I had looked on with wonder at the power of endurance of this pleasure-loving race; but soon my wonder had changed to fear, as I did not see what was going to be the end of all this unwholesome excitement. However, my anxiety was groundless; for, on Easter Sunday morning, I was greeted by another change, which, though scarcely less startling than the first, set my mind at rest.

Curls, ribbons, laces, and all the rest of it had reappeared as suddenly as they had vanished; once more, the table was groaning beneath its weight of dainty luxuries; once more, merry laughter and gay nonsense were ringing through the air; for the Viennese, with light hearts and consciences at rest, were renewing their old frivolous life.

The one short week, into which they had striven so valiantly to force a year's devotion, had come to an end; and with it the triumph of the priests, the harvest of the beggars: the churches having assumed

their wonted mournful air, stood empty, and so would stand until the wheel of time again brought round the sacred week.

At every turn in the old Kaiserstadt you come across reminiscences of the past. Vienna has been besieged times without number: twice it was captured by the Turks; twice by the French; perhaps it is the memory of this disgrace that makes old St. Stephen's and the Burg (where the Emperor lives) frown down upon us so gloomily. In the corner of the square in which the Cathedral stands, there is still to be seen a grim memorial of a quaint old custom. Wedged in between two handsome modern shops, is the trunk of an enormous tree—"der eisene baum," the iron tree, as it is called—into which thousands and thousands of nails have been driven; so many, in fact, that not a morsel of wood is to be seen. It appears that, in mediæval days, it was the custom when any son of Vienna was leaving his native town, for him to go, accompanied by his friends and relations, and drive a nail into the "eisene Baum." If the traveller ever came back, his first visit was to the tree, when he commemorated his safe return by driving a second nail by the side of the first.

London may be proud of its Park, Paris of its Bois, Berlin of Unter den Linden, but not one of these can compare with Vienna's Prater. It is impossible to conceive of anything more beautiful than some parts of this much loved resort of the Viennese.

The Prater begins close to the town; but at first, it is merely a well-trimmed garden, with itinerant musicians, pretty casinos, tiny coffee-houses, comfortable chairs and benches—in a word, another Champs Elysées. But as you make your way up the broad road, you soon leave behind you all these signs of cockney civilisation, and find yourself in perhaps the noblest avenue in Europe. It stretches for miles; on either side are tall lime trees and stately chestnuts, which have stood there for centuries. This is the main drive, which is always thronged with carriages; but shady walks and winding paths branch off at the sides, for such as wish to escape the crowd. As you go farther and farther from the city, the avenue becomes more narrow, less even and well kept; then it ceases to be an avenue at all, and turns into narrow lanes which lead you for miles through wild forest lands, remote from all signs of human habitation.

On the first of May is the Prater-Fest, when all Vienna, with one accord, turns out for merry-making. At twelve o'clock the Empress, in an open carriage drawn by six horses, starts from the Burg at the head of a grand procession. After her come the Court, diplomatists, nobles, and citizens, all in their smartest array. But the procession does not end here, for Vienna, city of the Hapsburgs though it be, is at heart democratic; therefore everyone who for this occasion can beg, borrow, or steal carriage, cart, or wheelbarrow, joins the Empress's cortège. Fish-mongers and greengrocers, laundresses and applegirls, all are there, happy as the day is long, like one great family, and, for the nonce, all men—and women too—are equal. The procession, often two or three miles long, passes through the town to the Prater, up the right side of the broad avenue and down the left, the Empress, whose beauty time cannot dim, always leading the way. Grandmother though she be, she is slight and upright as a girl, whilst with her glorious eyes and perfect features, she rivals the fairest young *débutante* in loveliness.

The smallest little street urchin in Vienna knows the story of this Empress, the beautiful Elizabeth. Nearly half a century ago, the Herzog in Baiern (for such was his title) was informed that for his eldest daughter, the august destiny of Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary was reserved. Now money was scarce in the ducal palace, but the whole family felt that, at any sacrifice, the little Duchess must be fitted for her future greatness. The Emperor was in no hurry to marry; so, for years, half the income of the Duke was devoted to the education of his eldest daughter. At length, just when teachers and professors were united in declaring that their duty was accomplished—for their charge was perfection—the Emperor came down to the little Castle at Tegernsee, to visit his betrothed, of whose perfections he had heard such rumours. But, alas! for the plans of mice and men! The Emperor was but three-and-twenty; and, untouched by the stately beauty and queen-like bearing of his destined bride, he fell madly in love with her younger sister Elizabeth, the family Cinderella, who, like a little savage, had passed her days scouring the country-side with her brothers, whilst her sister had been trained to courtly ways. The Emperor, in spite of all arguments, prayers, and entreaties, insisted

upon marrying the one whom he loved; and thus Elizabeth, upon whom no thought or care had been bestowed, who knew no more of courtly forms and etiquette than many a peasant girl, became Empress-Queen; whilst her accomplished sister, the unfortunate Caroline, married the King of Naples, who in a few short years was driven from his throne.

AMERICAN TORNADOES.

PUBLIC attention has been, of late, so repeatedly directed to quakings of the earth, that twistings and twirlings of the air, after receiving passing notice, have almost fallen into oblivion, a state of things which, however, can only be temporary. As they have already occurred, so they will recur again, as long as the same causes and conditions exist in ocean, earth, and air; and their effects and ravages are too singular and serious for it to be possible to regard them with indifference.

The strange phenomena attending these atmospheric commotions, and the diverse opinions entertained respecting their origin, have induced M. Faye, the eminent French astronomer, to make a special study of the tornadoes, amounting to the unlucky number of thirteen, which rushed over certain regions of North America on the twenty-ninth and thirtieth of May, 1879. The result of his investigations, and the conclusions they suggest, form the subject of a lucid "Notice Scientifique" in last year's number of the "Annuaire of the Bureau des Longitudes," a few of whose statements and convincing arguments we take the liberty of giving here.

Why should tornadoes be fiercer and more formidable in the United States than anywhere else? That is one of the first questions to suggest itself. Four hundred and sixty-seven destructive tornadoes have been recorded there between 1875 and 1881. The ruin they have caused naturally gives to meteorological questions in America an importance, which is far from being felt to the same degree on the European continent.

By its situation on the globe, the territory of the United States is first crossed by the tempests which have afterwards to traverse the Atlantic before reaching us. The United States are therefore the place where their direction and velocity ought to be studied. It is from the United States that their coming is announced to

us several days before their arrival—a considerable service which we cannot reciprocate, because no tempest ever travelled, nor ever will travel, in the opposite direction, by starting from Europe and reaching America.

Two opposite and contradictory theories exist respecting the violent commotions in the atmosphere, which are known to us by the name of tornadoes.

One of these theories—which corresponds to the popular belief that water-spouts pump up water from the sea—attributes their cause to vast currents of heated air rushing upwards from the ground towards the clouds. The other theory assigns the cause of tornadoes to aerial whirlpools and eddies, which, originating in the upper regions of the atmosphere, stretch downwards till they reach the soil. The first theory is supported in America by the authority of Franklin and other great names; the second is the one which M. Faye maintains to be the true explanation of the phenomena, and which, we may say, he has fully proved.

First let us take the doctrine of “aspiration” by tornadoes, or of their sucking or drawing upwards things lying on the ground. This theory supposes a lower stratum of warm, moist air to be rising in the atmosphere. While so mounting, it expands, cools, and abandons a part of its moisture, which takes the form of a cloud. It then again becomes warmer, in consequence of the heat disengaged by the condensation of its vapour. Being therefore lighter than the surrounding medium, it will continue to mount. On reaching a higher region where the air is rarer, it will again dilate and afterwards cool, thereby giving up another portion of its moisture; and so on, until the process is repeated as far as the limits of the atmosphere.

According to Mr. Espy, the inventor of this theory, the ascending column of air would cause a sucking or draught at its foot, much as happens in a chimney at the base of which a fire is always burning. But here we fail to discover any reason either why the ascending column of air should move onwards in one direction or another, or why the said column of air should rapidly revolve or spin from right to left. Nevertheless, these are two essential characteristics of tornadoes.

Now what constitutes a tempest is precisely the violence of the rotatory movement of the air. If a ship, driven by a

cyclone, runs before the wind, every navigator knows that, carried away by the rotatory impulse, it will successively experience winds blowing from every point of the compass. It will even perform several revolutions round the centre of the hurricane. Famous instances of this fact might be quoted; but our aspiratory theorists will not allow it. The ship, they say, will be driven to the centre, namely, into the region of central calm, and will there remain. Equally unexplained is the rapid movement of translation, or motion onwards, by which every cyclone and every tornado is propelled, rivalling the pace of the fastest express train.

Now, in matters of this kind, a theoretical error may have serious consequences. It was not by meteorologists that the laws of cyclones were found out. They were discovered experimentally, independent of any hypothesis, by navigators. They especially establish the rule that in cyclones the movement of the air is sensibly circular; whence comes precisely the very name of “cyclone.” Our “whirlwind” expresses the same idea; and on this circularity are based the rules for handling a ship in case of tempest.

Evidently it will make a great difference in the working of a ship whether it be commanded by a meteorologist or a sailor. It was to avoid such dangers that M. Faye undertook, in 1875, to explain to the world the true Law of Storms,* and he has since then studied the tornadoes of the United States, because the traces of the wind's action were there inscribed, not on a ship's log-book, but on the soil, by the wrecks of houses, of trees laid prostrate, of walls and fences thrown down. In these cases doubt is not possible; material proofs refute meteorological theories.

The doctrine supported by M. Faye identifies cyclones and tornadoes, from a mechanical point of view. Both resolve themselves into a purely rotatory movement, propagated from the top downwards, with the sole difference that the spirals of the tornado, much more proportionally contracted than those of cyclones, when in contact with the ground, revolve with a rapidity greater than that of the most violent storms. In fact, the gyrations of a tornado at its lower portion attain, or even surpass, half the initial velocity of a musket-ball. It is manifest that a gigantic

* See “Storm Laws,” ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, vol. xiv., p. 246.

screw, though consisting of no more solid substance than air, spinning round at such a rate, cannot fail to commit incalculable damage.

A cyclone embraces a vast area of the earth's surface within the circuit of its influence; a tornado's effects are restricted within quite narrow limits on each side of its onward progress, although throughout the whole length of its course the tornado may continue its devastations so long as it remains in contact with, or touches, the earth. If it hangs in mid air without reaching or brushing along the earth, no disastrous effects are produced. A cyclone is a giant of enormous power, who may break up towards the close of his career, into several tornadoes. A tornado, comparatively a dwarf, is endowed, nevertheless, with incredibly concentrated violence and fury.

It is useless for theorists to maintain that tornadoes are ascending currents which mount from the ground to the clouds. Eye-witnesses on the twenty-ninth and thirtieth of May, who were present at the commencement of the tornadoes, one and all saw them descend from the clouds. Mr. Eddleblute, for instance, first noticed the Stockdale tornado in the form of a narrow shred of a cloud, like a rope hanging down from the sky. Soon it began to descend, reaching the ground sixty rods to the south-west of his house, stripping masses of turf from the meadow, and crushing rails over an extent of thirty feet in breadth. Beyond this circle of thirty feet no harm was done, nor was any violent gust of wind felt. Half-an-hour afterwards, Mr. Condray perceived it rising and falling alternately. It was then passing over an elevated plain or table-land. Arrived at the edge of the declivity, it furiously attacked the tops of trees, but did not yet touch the ground. Shortly afterwards, it fell upon Mr. Condray's house and partially destroyed it.

The Delphos tornado also began with numerous little waterspouts dangling, like so many whip-thongs, from the clouds, subsequently uniting in one single whirlwind, which performed a portion of its course with its lower extremity still up in the air. It reached the woods fringing Saline River, Ottawa, but only spent its force on the tops of the trees, merely stripping off their leaves. It thus passed over several houses without touching them. At last, between Saline River and Salt Creek, it reached the ground, destroying Mr. Disney's house and doing other damage.

About five in the afternoon of the thirtieth of May, the inhabitants of Wakefield remarked in the south-west a threatening cloud like an elephant's trunk. For a while, its extremity remained above the ground, but reached it on the elevated plain, close to Wakefield. At Waterville the tornado began, at the junction of two streams of clouds, by an arm or protuberance of the thickness of a tun descending to within a hundred feet of the ground, then rising and descending again alternately. But it did not touch the ground till the mouth of the Little Blue River, where it destroyed Mr. Sawyer's house. After passing the Big Blue River, it rose and remained at a considerable elevation in the air, continuing its course to the north-east as far as Elm Creek, where it disappeared—doubtless in the clouds, for no more was heard of it.

The same happened with the Lincoln County tornado; the same with the Barnard tornado, whose ravages were so terrible, and which also rose in the air at the close of its devastations. Moreover, almost all tornadoes, in the course of their destructive effects, dance or rise and fall vertically. They mount and travel onwards without their lower extremity touching the ground, then sink down again, repeating the movement several times. It is a remarkable fact that, when they cease to touch the earth, their action on the soil, their ravages, also entirely cease, but recommence as soon as the extremity of the tornado is low enough to reach the tops of trees or roofs of houses, and especially when it comes in contact with the ground. Besides which, all tornadoes, so long as they have their lower extremity in the air, are invariably closed below, resembling a sack suspended by the upper opening, and with a stone or small weight at the bottom.

All the American tornadoes, great or small, in full action or at their outset, while they still hang from the clouds without reaching the ground, were described by witnesses on the spot as funnel-shaped or elephant's-trunk-shaped clouds. They have a geometrical figure. Their outer service is one of revolution. As it cannot be doubted that powerful gyrations are occurring inside that surface, it follows that those gyrations are geometrically circular, and the facts of the case are in perfect agreement with the theory of gyratory movements.

Every spectator of a tornado believes

that what he beholds is a portion of the upper clouds drawn down towards the ground. The air inside it must, therefore, be cold, since it condenses the moisture of the air down to our level. But the air outside the tornado is hot and moist, whilst persons directly struck by the tornado have felt, after the intense heat developed at the moment of the shock, an almost intolerable sensation of cold. The fact is completely explained by supposing this glacial air to proceed from the upper regions of the atmosphere, drawn down by the revolution of a descending vortex, exactly like the downward suction of a whirlpool in water.

"*Omnia bona desuper*," "all good things come from on high"—Bewicke's motto to his charming woodcut of a deer drinking at a waterfall, is doubtless true of matters in general; but it is equally true that some bad things, tornadoes included, also come to us from above.

The most striking feature of a tornado—which has been reproduced and fixed by instantaneous photography, and which is never seen except when the tornado is acting on the ground or on the water—is the formation of what M. Faye calls the "*buisson*," or bush, namely the cloud of dust, leaves, and rubbish of all sorts, or foam, which is raised at its foot. All the sketches and drawings by sailors and travellers give it. The whirlwind, beating and ploughing the earth circularly with prodigious force, raises outside and around itself clouds of froth and spray, or of dust and light bits of broken materials which, at a distance, looks like a thicket of copse-wood.

Do tornadoes pull up trees? They break or throw them down, but do not pull or pump them up. If they did, the trees so drawn out of the ground would be carried off vertically, in an upright position. Once out of the circle of action, they would fall to the ground in any chance direction. Nothing of the kind occurs.

Do tornadoes suck the roofs off houses? Not more than they pull up trees by the roots. A roof, struck by a violent horizontal wind, is lifted and carried away. By its very form, it will play the part of a boy's kite, which will cause it to rise to a considerable altitude. To an observer placed on the line of its course, it will appear to mount vertically. The same will happen to the sail of a ship carried away by a gust of wind.

A curious property of whirlpools in fluids

which revolve round a vertical axis, like those we see in the eddies of fast-running streams, is to subdivide into several smaller whirls, whenever the motion of whirling slackens. On the other hand, when that motion increases in force and rapidity, the smaller whirlpools merge into one of greater power and magnitude. M. Faye was so struck by the facility with which the gyratory motion subdivides and is resolved into other small gyrations, resembling the manner in which the inferior living creatures are multiplied by "segmentations," that he has borrowed from natural history the term, which seems to be accepted in meteorology. Almost all the tornadoes of the twenty-ninth of May presented phenomena of segmentation. Some divided into two or more; others, as the ten little tornadoes that hung down from the same cloud, combined their whirling motions into one.

It is certain that no part of the habitable world is more frequently devastated by tornadoes than the United States; and, on that extensive territory, some regions are more exposed to their ravages than others. Evidently, this state of things depends on the geographical situation of the country, and the configuration of its soil. A great part of the United States is very easily accessible to the hot winds of the Gulf, which spread at their ease over the vast spaces lying between the Cordilleras of the west, and the more or less mountainous States of the east. The combination of these circumstances is particularly favourable to the formation of tornadoes, associated with hailstorms or showers of rain, whose regular gyrations do not reach the ground.

The difference, in this respect, between Europe and the United States is perfectly comprehensible. We receive the majority of American cyclones, but they reach us weakened, broken, and with a partial loss of cirrus cloud. Our soil is less uniform in level, and the hot, moist winds of the lower strata have greater difficulty in spreading over vast areas at once.

Europe may now and again have its tornadoes, like that of Monville-Malauney, in France, but they are less numerous, less extended, and less fearful than in the United States.

Even in America, the districts lying between the Pacific and the grand chains of which the Rocky Mountains form part, appear to be exempt from this terrible and destructive scourge.

COMPENSATION.

ONE woman, in furs and velvets ;
 Another, in squalid rags ;
 One, rolled by in her stately carriage ;
 The other, stood on the flags.

One woman, alone in her carriage ;
 By the other, a little child,
 Who, watching the prancing horses,
 Looked up in her face, and smiled.

She stooped to her boy and kissed him,
 And gave him a hoarded crust ;
 The other had just left costly blooms
 Where her one son lay in dust.

One, back to her darkened mansion,
 Wealth cannot hold death at bay !
 One, back to the hut where labour
 Brought bread for the coming day.

Perhaps, as over the sands of life,
 Time's great tide ebbs and flows,
 More fates among us are equal
 Than their outward seeming shows.

A LONG RECKONING.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

PART III.

NORTH CANNOCK was about the last pit I should have picked out to work in, if I had had any choice in the matter. The water dripped and oozed from every bit of rock, and lay in pools, or ran in little streams along the gangways. There was a white growth, betwixt mildew and toadstools, along the sides of the passages; the air was heavy, and the ground was slippery and greasy under your feet. Altogether it was the worst pit I ever worked in, and I meant to get my business with Dandy over as quick as possible and find myself a better job.

Now for the right understanding of what is to be told, I must tell you how the coal lay in that pit and how we worked it. The seams were unusually thin, and they ran downwards instead of crossways, so that only one or two men could work at a facing. Short passages sloping upwards from the main gangway led to each of these facings; and, of course, the way the coal ran caused the working ends of these passages to be higher and roomier to stand up in than the lower ends, where they joined the broader passage.

I was put on single-handed, in a passage where the beams overhead and on one side had sunk—as often happens in a mine—so that a man had to stoop and hold himself a little on one side to pass along it; yet there was plenty of room to stand upright at the end where the seam was. When Dandy

put me on my job, I didn't speak, lest my voice should let out more than my face could. As he went away, crouching under the sunken beams, I looked after him and thought how I might follow him bare-foot and very softly down that passage; and when I came up to him, how I would whisper two or three words in his ear which would make him start and turn, and then I would twist my hands round his throat and force him, powerless to cry out, down on to the ground; and then how I would crush the life out of him, and leave him there while I went as cool as possible to the cage and up into the open air, with my long reckoning settled at last. Again and again I thought it over, till I felt as if it were already done, and as if he lay dead and stark in the damp runnel at the edge of the gangway. Yet when he came my way at midday, I let him go safe, thinking evening would be better for me to get away; and when evening came, I missed my chance again, because another man came along with him.

I don't think I had ever plainly meant to kill him, till I saw him so well-to-do and so seeming religious. Perhaps I had, and perhaps I hadn't. Anyhow, I meant it then, as certain as any man ever meant murder in this world; but the days passed one after another, and there was always something to stand in the way of the deed; either I had a mate working with me, or there was someone with him, or near us; and once or twice when I could have done it easily, I let him go.

All this time I had never seen my old sweetheart, nor tried to catch sight of her, nor asked my landlady any questions about her daughter-in-law. I had that feeling on me, that if I saw her I should change my mind about what I meant to do to Dandy; indeed, it was the thought of her eyes, even after all I had suffered through her, that kept him safe when there was nothing else between him and his death-blow.

So a few weeks went by, when one day, just as I began work, Dandy, for some reason best known to himself as "butty," came along with his tools and set to work at my "facing."

He placed himself so that I could have hit him with my pick on the back of the head, and it would have been all over with him before he could have raised a finger to save himself. Now when I saw him, so to speak, come and give himself up to me, I made up my mind that I would take the chance, and not put off any longer.

He spoke to me now and then, and now and then I took breath for a minute to see whether the moment had come to let the blow fall. The reason I didn't strike at once was that I couldn't settle what I should say to him to make him understand who I was, without giving him time to defend himself. You see he had tools as well as I had, and he was quite as strong as me.

We got one truck-load out and ran it into the main passage. "It shall be on the way back to the facings," I said to myself. "It's no use shilly-shallying any longer." So I let him go on first, stooping under the bent beams, while I hung back to get my chance, and to make sure that no one was within hearing. That must have taken about twenty seconds, but it seemed to me more like an hour. All was very still; there was nothing to be heard but the dripping of the water, and the far-off sound of voices; so I turned and made a step after him.

Suddenly I heard, not very far off, along the main passage, a heavy rumbling and falling, as if maybe the back of a coal-truck had given way, and let the load out; but it kept on too long for that, and it wasn't like the falling of brittle coal. Then it changed to a sort of roaring and rushing, like nothing I had ever heard before, and, as I turned back towards it, the light of my lamp fell on a truck spinning past, borne by a torrent of muddy water, which was rising as quickly as it rushed. At first the force of the flood bore it past the opening of our passage, yet it soon eddied round and sought a way upwards, gurgling and surging like a living, angry animal. Dandy turned too, but he didn't stand to think.

"Hi, mate!" he shouted, "the water has broken into the mine; get down to the gangway, we may reach the shaft yet."

But we couldn't possibly, the water was up to my shoulders where I stood, and the gangway must have been blocked besides with trucks. There was nothing to do but to get back to our working place, and to hope that the water wouldn't rise to the full height of the hole.

All this had come on us so quick, that it was only when we had waded back and climbed up a bit on the coal, that I could make out what had befallen me. There I was, four or five hundred yards from the shaft, shut up in a few square feet of breathing room, where I should most likely have to stay and starve, if the water

didn't rise and drown me; there I was with him of all men on earth. It seemed almost too cruel to be really true.

We had saved our lamps; Dandy began by putting his out. "We must make the most of the lights one at a time, so long as they'll last," he said. "We needn't be in the dark before we're obliged to be."

I let him do as he would. I didn't care whether we were in the light or in the dark. My head was full of one thought, which was, whether I should let him see his lamp burn out, or whether I should settle my reckoning with him at once, and then face the end alone. And yet what would it be like, I thought, if I were to do it, to have to stand there, half in the water and half out, clinging to the side of the working, with him lying in the water below me, and the recollection of his dying cry in my ears? And when I could stand no longer for cold and weakness, I should have to sink down and stifle and die, where I had thrown him before. It was for this I had wandered so far, and waited so long! It did seem hard that I was to be balked of my revenge, as I'd been balked all my life long. I hadn't spoken as yet, but thinking of this maddened me out of silence, and I raised my hand and cursed what had befallen us.

"Mate," said Dandy, "have a care to your words. It is the Lord who has laid this judgement upon us."

"Curse you for a canting humbug," I said back, and I tried my best to see into his face by the light of the lamp. I saw that his eyes were shut, and that his lips were moving; but I dared not lift my hand and kill him. He didn't speak again for a long time, how long I can't say; but I could tell by my hunger that dinner time was past, and my victuals were soaking at the bottom of the muddy water. Dandy had placed his higher than mine, and he'd thought of saving them when he ran back to the facing.

"Have a bit of bread and meat, mate," he said, when he spoke again. "If you're feeling as empty as I am you must want a bit: and your tommy-bag is under water, ain't it?"

"It is," I said, "and there it can stay; but I won't touch a bite o' yours."

"Dont'ee spare, mate," he said again. "I've got a good bit, and I'd rather share as long as it lasts; you'd do as much for me if I had none."

"That I wouldn't," I said. "I'd chuck it all away sooner."

"Well, mate, I thinks different; and as you'll hold out longer with a bit of victuals inside you, you'd better take some."

"I won't, I tell you. Can't you let a man alone?" and I swore at him.

So he let me alone, and ate a bit himself, and put the rest away.

The time went on; whether it was minutes or hours or what, of course we didn't know. I reckoned that my lamp would last about four hours; it burnt itself out, and then Dandy had to light his.

The water, as far as we could see, kept at the same level, neither rising nor sinking. At last Dandy's lamp went out too, and then there was nothing to measure time by or to show us the surface of the water.

I was numb with cold, and faint with hunger, and I began to get heavy with sleep. For a while I thought I would lie down and make an end of myself, but somehow life is very hard to part with, even when you have nothing to do but to wait for death.

"Have a bit of bread now, mate," Dandy said again. "You'll be used up soon, and no one can get to help us for some time yet."

"And suppose no one does get to help us," I said back. "Suppose, before the mine is pumped out, we're both used up."

"Well, we're in the Lord's hands, and He knows what's best for us. We must make ready to abide His will."

"Speak for yourself," I said. "Don't put you and me together; you're too pious to be lumped in with a black like me."

"There's no difference betwixt us in His sight; we're both the work of His hands, and both sinful creatures. It ain't too late for you to call on Him. I'll help you if you'll let me."

But I didn't answer him, nor I didn't take his bread, and the time went on till the air about us was scarcely fit to go on breathing. I could never tell you how I felt. Talking about it is worse than nothing. Suppose you had been me, how could you have made any one else understand the dreadfulness of it all?

At last, in that weary darkness, I heard Dandy moaning to himself, as if he was very bad. For a good spell I hearkened, and then in spite of myself I felt bound to ask him what ailed him in particular.

"I'm getting ready for death and judgement, mate," he said, "as I hope you are, and I'm thinking over the black bits in my life and what I've done amiss."

"And I suppose," I said, "that you've remembered something you'd forgotten all about while you been so pious, and now you begin to wish it hadn't cropped up to plague you at your last minute?"

"Nay, there you are wrong," he answered. "What's on my mind has been on it this long time, and is seldom off it. This ain't the first time I've moaned over it, and I know the Lord has forgiven me for it, only I ought to have made it up with asking a man's pardon too; for which I never could get the chance."

"Perhaps you didn't try after the chance?" I said.

I was ready enough to talk now, wishing to find out what tack he was on.

"There you're wrong again, mate. I can't tell you all the story, for it's a long one, and it lies only between him, and me, and my Maker. But this I can tell you, that I've sought that man, who was once a mate of mine, this many a year, as I promised my wife on her death-bed; but I never came across him."

"Is she dead then?" I asked, all struck of a heap.

"Yes; she's been dead six years. If you knew all the story, perhaps, you'd think it served me right to lose her. No doubt the Lord's hand was in it, to punish me for what I had done. I owed the man money, too; and I could have died easier if it had been paid back; but the Lord knows best."

Then he was quiet, and so was I, thinking how my Agnes was long dead and gone, and how while I had been looking for Dandy he had looked for me; and how what had gone crooked could never be pulled straight; and how it didn't matter whether we got out of the mine or stayed there to die.

My head got confused at last; I could not fix my mind on anything. I forgot where I was, and old places came back to me very clear and plain. It was wonderful. There were the moor, and the birch trees, and the heather, the river, and the evening sunshine. I even heard the singing of the thrushes, the rattle of the night-jar, and the heavy flight of the herons overhead. My sweetheart looked up into my face, and then laid her head on my shoulder. Then the sky turned black, and it grew dark and icy cold in a moment. Good Heaven! that sunset had been past and over a dozen years, and I should never see sun rise or set any more; nor would she. She was dead, and she had

been sorry for what she had done to me. I was sorry, too; and though I didn't know anything about being religious, I hoped I might be forgiven for having so nearly killed a man who would willingly have made some amends to me if it had lain in his power. A wonderful longing came over me to have it all out with Dandy; but I felt so faint and mothered that I didn't know how to begin. I opened my lips many times before words came; but at last I said:

"I say, mate, I've got summat to say that I should like you to hear; it fits in with what you was saying just now, so as you'll be greatly astonished. I had a chum once that I did a good turn for in saving his life. And I had a sweetheart that I held very greatly to, and who promised to marry me. Then once, when I wasn't there to keep things right, these two played me false. They robbed me, too, of all I had saved, and went away out of my reach."

Dandy wanted to stop me there, but I wouldn't let him.

"Wait a bit," I said. "I've begun now, and I should like to finish; we shall both die easier. I've done all I could ever since to find that chum that I might serve him out. About a month ago I come across him, and I knowed him at a glance, though he'd set up for being pious and respectable, which he wasn't in old days. He didn't know me, because he had never seen me since my face got drawn on one side and scarred, so I've been following him up and watching my chance to kill him; yes, mate, to kill him, because he'd gone up in the world while I'd gone down, and because he'd set up for pious and respectable. And his death was very near upon him, only it didn't quite come up with him, and I'm glad it didn't. I'm glad my hands are clean from blood; and she's dead and gone, and you're sorry for what can't be mended."

I'd found it easier to go on than to begin, but when I'd got to the end, my throat seemed to swell up inside, and I heard myself laughing and sobbing by turns, and I felt Dandy's hand groping about till it lit on mine, and he said something about "Zekiel," and "His ways are past finding out." After which I can't rightly remember anything more; but that doesn't matter, for there is scarcely any more to tell.

Of course we got out—else I shouldn't be here telling this tale at the wish of young Obadiah Poole—but I had a very

close shave of not being here, for it took five days to get the water pumped out of the mine, and I was as near gone as possible before they reached us. Dandy lasted better than I did, because of the food he had had; and the last part of the time he had to hold me up as well as himself. Certainly after he knew who I was, he did all that in him lay, to make up to me for what I had lost through him; but all he could really give me back was that which I cared least for—I mean my twenty pounds with interest, carefully reckoned from the very day he had persuaded my girl to go off with him.

Thinking it all over now, it seems like a bit out of a book, such as Obadiah reads aloud to us, and if he has only done his duty by the pens and ink he's used up, I daresay a good many others will think so too.

UNCLE BOB'S NIECE.

By LESLIE KEITH.

Author of "The Chilcotes," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THEY were provincial, and not of London, that was easy to see.

The old man betrayed it by his walk; by the cut and make of his clothes; by his unkempt hair and beard; and by a certain suspicion and distrust in his glance. The girl, who hung on his arm, proved it still more convincingly by the freshness of her colouring—those roses never grew in London—and by the modest, simple wonder in her frank, blue eyes: eyes that grew large and wistful at the endless procession of houses, of people, of gay carriages, of shops full of untold delights.

A good many passers-by found time, even in the busiest hour of the afternoon, to glance at the pair, who were of a distinguishable type. The man might be about sixty; though a rough and bracing life had made him look older. He was broad-shouldered and short, and his iron-grey hair framed a bronzed and wrinkled face, out of which a pair of light-brown eyes shone with the clear, bright glitter of cairngorms. An obstinate, self-contented face, except when it was turned towards the girl, and then it softened subtly, and betrayed many hidden gentler possibilities.

As for her, she reminded you of all sorts of modest country delights: honeysuckle and sweet-pea; the song of the lark; the

sunshine of green silences; and the freshness of daisied pastures. A shepherdess out of Arcady of a sudden borne into the throng and whirl, the vulgar activities of the Brompton Road.

She carried herself very well, and her slim erectness was a gift of Nature, and owed nothing to art. Her dress was simple; but there was deliberate personal choice in the fashion and cut of it, and in the touches of ribbon and what not that brightened it; and she was girlish enough to take a great interest in the beguiling bargains displayed in the windows, and to find many hints to stow away for future triumphs.

"So this is London, Uncle Bob?" she said, with a sigh of full content. "Big, wonderful, delightful London, that holds more people than there are in all Scotland; and we are four hundred miles away from home! I feel a great traveller. You never saw anything more wonderful than London, though you've been everywhere."

"Wait till you've been everywhere too, lass," said Uncle Bob, meeting this challenge with the condescending tolerance of one who has left nothing unseen.

"I want no more than this," she said with a contented laugh; "and we've a great deal to learn how and to mend in our ways, you and I. You must have your hair cut, dear; and there's something wrong with your coat. As for me, I want to be taken to pieces and made over again. I'm quite hopeless. The girls here, you see, have all studied their backs, Uncle Bob, and mine has been neglected. Miss Lamb has been too impartial; she ought to have scrimped the front view, and sacrificed everything to a lump behind. I'm like nothing so much as a 'drocket' sparrow," she said, surveying herself with mock melancholy in a sheet of mirror thoughtfully provided by an enterprising shopkeeper, with a knowledge of human nature and a desire to double the attractions of his window.

"Well, Tilly lass, you can make yourself as fine as thee love; there's the money to do it. I guess you won't find many that will turn up their noses at Bob Burton's cheque," he said with the complacency of a self-made man, and an accent that was impartially cosmopolitan.

"I guess you won't find many uncles as good as mine," she laughed, with affectionate caricature. "Where do you think we are now, Uncle Bob, and what do you think we shall do next?"

"According to my bearings, Tilly lass,

we can't be far from an eating-house. It's five minutes since we passed the last one, and I feel kind o' ready for a bite of something now."

"Why, it's only two hours since we dined," she smiled; "and four since we lunched. Then there was that little odd meal you slid in between breakfast and——"

"Call that a meal!" he cried with his big laugh; "it wasn't enough to keep a sick sparrow in life."

By this time they had halted before a window set out with sections of cake and cold pie, sausages, and other such dainties; and bearing the announcement in large letters that tea and coffee were made fresh for each customer.

"This will do as well as another, I guess. We might go further and fare worse," he said, giving the yielding arm which clung to his a little forward motion.

The shop was pretty full, as eating-houses seem to be at all hours and seasons in London, though the world is supposed to be divided into the two great classes of those who dine and those who lunch at midday.

It was the diners at two who were mostly represented, and these were courting indigestion over sections of cold pie and layers of ham as a foundation for the contents of the steaming tea-cup.

Uncle Bob drew his niece to a vacant corner, where a little table, just big enough for two, stood unclaimed, and Tilly sat down with a blush and eyes that drooped before the glances of the young men engaged at a larger table opposite.

One of them was still at the earlier stages of his meal, while the other had progressed to the plum-cake, which seemed to be the popular conclusion; but beyond a similarity of taste in food, they had no points of resemblance.

From their dress and appearance, both might be City clerks; but the one was a modest clerk, who looked at Tilly with the most respectful admiration, and the other was a forward clerk, who inspected her through an eyeglass, and approved of her audibly in terms of superfluous profanity.

Tilly was subtly aware of all this—it is an instinct with girls, even though they have been brought up on deserted islands, or, what is practically the same, in the blank solitude of a Scottish hill village, to know when they awaken admiration in the other sex. There was this vital difference, however—that the knowledge made her

uncomfortable; whereas, had she been a London girl, she would either have been loftily indifferent or titteringly gratified, according to her mental constitution.

She did not look up as she sipped her cup of tea, while Uncle Bob grappled as valiantly with his slab of pie as if he had not broken his fast that day.

Undoubtedly Tilly was the prettier because of her downcast, dark-fringed lids and the flush on her cheek, and it was not at all wonderful that everybody should look at her, and that some few should feel the better for the sight. Among these was the young man who had finished his meal, just as Uncle Bob had chased the last fragments of pie successfully round the plate and conveyed them to his mouth on the point of his knife.

"And now," said he, appeased for the moment, "we'll be making for Madam's house, Tilly. I guess I can hold on till supper-time."

"Do you know the way, Uncle Bob?"

"Not I!" he assured her in his loud, cheerful voice. "But I've a good Scotch tongue in my head. I can speir, lass."

He proceeded to summon the waitress with a loud rap of his knife on the table, which focussed the glances on him for the moment.

She was a wonderful young woman, this waitress, with a great deal of hair massed on her brow, and a great deal of skirt draped up behind; and she had all the air of languid indifference to your wants, and scorn of your person, that every self-respecting waitress is bound to have.

"Can you tell us the way to Prince's Gate, my dear?" asked Uncle Bob, as he drew out a handful of silver in payment of his bill.

She either could not or would not; perhaps because she was bent on examining Tilly, with a lofty contempt for the thickness of her waist and the archaic cut of her gown; and it was at this juncture that the modest clerk stepped forward.

"I know the way," he said. "Indeed, I am going that way myself. I will show it you if you will allow me."

Uncle Bob turned those keen, clear eyes of his upon the speaker. It was a pet belief of Uncle Bob's that he was skilled in the reading of character as it is displayed in the expression, and, indeed, much contact with men of all sorts and conditions, of all nations and creeds, had yielded him ample opportunity. The face he studied had a very honest record to give

forth. It was not handsome, but it was manly; the brow square; the mouth and chin were hidden by a pointed brown beard and full moustache; but the eyes, which are as trustworthy an index to the soul, were quite direct in their challenge. It was such a face as raises hopes in the breasts of women beggars; that inspires confidence in children wanting to know the time, and in anxious maiden ladies, who are always distrustful of policemen, and require to be frequently redirected on their timid adventures through the labyrinth of London.

All this was a great deal to read at a glance, but Uncle Bob was quick in making up his mind, and he accepted this young man without positive guarantees.

"All right," he said in his off-hand fashion, "you lead the way, and we'll follow, Tilly and me. It's a wonderful maze, this London, even to a man who has seen the most there is to be seen in this world, and your jabbering police, with their clippet English, don't help to clear the business."

"They don't waste words," said the stranger with a smile, "and one has to have a quick grasp to keep the rights and lefts of their directions in one's memory."

"We could hail a coach, to be sure," said Uncle Bob, with a sudden stimulating remembrance of his wealth; "but my niece here likes to walk, and to see the brows in the windows, eh, Tilly lass?"

Tilly gave forth a little dissenting murmur from the other side of Uncle Bob, but the young man struck in rather eagerly:

"It isn't far, and the shops are pretty this time of year."

He looked across the barrier of Uncle Bob's bulk, and read the assent in Tilly's shy eyes.

"What sort of people, now, will they be who live in this place we're steering for?" the Scotchman asked after a pause.

Their guide, looked puzzled for a moment.

"Oh, you mean as to position and wealth, and that sort of thing?"

"Are they tip-top folks?"

"Quite, I should say," the young man smiled. "It's a fashionable part, and the rents are very high. Only rich people would live there."

"Carriages and flunkies, and fine dinners and fine gowns, eh?"

"I should say so—yes."

"What did I tell you, Tilly?" Her

uncle turned upon her with a triumph that was the result of some previous argument unknown to the listener.

"Don't you think, dear," said the girl in a low voice, shrinking inwardly from the prospect before her, "don't you think we had better go somewhere else for to-night—till our boxes come—and— isn't it rather late to call?" she faltered; but her uncle overruled her with loud decision.

Tilly's grand friend had said that she was to go straight to her when she came to London. What could be plainer than that? And if she wasn't fine enough for these fashionable folks, she could go out first thing in the morning and order a dozen new gowns and bonnets. He could pay for them, he hoped, and never know he had spent the money.

He finally crushed her by extracting a reluctant opinion from his neighbour as to the etiquette of calling hours in Belgravia, in which he found his own view sustained beyond argument.

"I don't say but what I should have thought twelve o'clock a good enough time myself," he said, with a sort of simple honesty that oddly alternated with his boastfulness; "but since five's the hour, why, we couldn't have come more pat; it wants five minutes to it yet," and he studied a massive gold watch which he drew laboriously from its pocket.

They had now turned down to Prince's Gate, and saw the long vista of twinkling lamps shining faintly in the dusk before them, till it faded into the foliage of the Park. Uncle Bob was not at all impressed with the grandeur of the stately quarter. He accepted it cheerfully as only what a man of his means had every right to expect. He began to scan the imposing fronts with a critical selection, choosing and rejecting as if he were another Aladdin, with a wonder-working lamp, who had but to will in order to possess.

While they walked he entertained his companion with an outline of his career, from its typical two-and-sixpenny beginning to its present vaguely shrouded eminence, dwelling chiefly on points that illustrated his own acumen. Uncle Bob had been everywhere, and never lacked a contrast or a simile.

And so, all too soon for one, at least, of the little group, Number Twenty was reached, where their ways parted. The modest clerk had not left them the remotest possibility of straying; he had stretched his guidance to its utmost limits; and there

was nothing left for him but to plod back again to the highway and hail the first omnibus for Fulham—a sorry ending to an adventure he found stirring.

"Well, good-bye," said Uncle Bob, holding out a hearty hand. "Maybe some day I'll be able to do you as good a turn, my lad; and if you'll look us up and take a bit of supper with us, you'll be very welcome. You're in the City?"

"In a bank," said the young fellow modestly. "We don't always get away so early."

"Well, you can't come wrong, as far as we're concerned; and I make no doubt Tilly's friend will be glad to see you."

The young man murmured something which might pass for thanks or acceptance; but Uncle Bob was visited by a new doubt.

"They won't have had dinner?" he questioned, looking anxiously at his mentor.

"I should say not."

"What time will they be having it?" he next demanded.

"Eight o'clock, or thereabouts, probably." The reply was given with hesitation. "I don't know much about the life in such places."

He turned to go. Tilly's hand fluttered out shyly for a moment, and was as quickly withdrawn. His own, sent forth too late to meet hers, fell back too. They both smiled and reddened a little; and with a bow he left her.

A gusty sigh followed him down the steps, and Uncle Bob's lament overtook him in the darkness.

"Eight o'clock! Three mortal hours! I wish, Tilly, lass, I had stowed away another slice of yon pie."

But for once she had no sympathetic word of consolation for this most afflicting appetite.

"He's taller than you, Uncle Bob," she said; "and I wish you had asked him his name."

"Didn't I?" he questioned carelessly. "I told him mine, anyhow," he added cheerfully, as if that made up for everything.

CHAPTER II.

THE house before which the strangers stood, might well have inspired anyone of less varied experience than Uncle Bob with a certain inward shrinking. Uncle Bob's close contact with life had lent an edge of easy certainty to his manners which

served him quite as effectually as the best sort of breeding. When a man has breasted the blows of circumstances under all sorts of conditions, and has come out triumphantly a conqueror of his own fate, it is not John Thomas of the powdered head and silken calves who is going to make him tremble. Fate had befriended the rough Scotchman in most of his ventures, and he who had been held in honour as a King among the scanty squatting population of Southern Australia, who had wrung a measure of respect from the rough delvers of San Francisco by the luck that seemed to cling to him in all that he undertook, was hardly the man to be overawed by the comfortably prosperous air of western London.

But little soft, shy Tilly, whose simple code of etiquette was bounded by the hills that shut in Lilliesmuir, might well feel a thrill of dismay and uncertainty in face of so new an experience. At Lilliesmuir, three o'clock was the latest hour to which calling might with any decency be postponed. You thus shunned the two o'clock dinner—though you might share its lingering odours—and you in like manner left a margin of escape before the hour of tea. To wear one's Sunday hat and gloves and to have a wholesome respect for daylight hours, was part of the visiting law of Tilly's social world, and here were she and Uncle Bob defying custom at the very outset of the new life!

For Uncle Bob's coat was like no other coat they had encountered in London, and Tilly's travelling gloves had a shabby neatness in their mended tips; and, worse than all, the sanction of daylight was theirs no more, for everywhere without and within, gas and lamps had routed the dusk.

Houses have a way of betraying the character of their owners, even on the outside. Walking down Prince's Gate, on that side of it which faces the Art and Cookery Schools, and towards the end that abuts on the Park, you would have singled out Mrs. Percy Popham's house from its neighbours by the extra jubilation of its air. It seemed to step out as if it had a right to a front place, and it appeared somehow to have more balcony, more withered Virginia creeper, more glass-shaded flower-boxes, more blue and yellow pots than its companions.

Anybody might know that there was money enough here to gratify all sorts of whims, and some few shrewd and observant people would have made an accurate

guess that Mrs. Percy Popham, who owned the money, was a widow.

Perhaps Mr. Percy Popham would have had a more restrained taste in ornament; but he had been dead a long time, and was beyond consultation. In his day there had been no blue and yellow pots, and the footmen had not been clothed like strangely plumaged birds; but Mrs. Popham consoled her widowhood by many indulgences not permitted her in the married state.

She made a sort of merit of her bereft condition, as if she had voluntarily renounced Mr. Popham to some great cause. He had, in truth, died quietly in his bed of a very unromantic complaint, and it was only time—which so gently blurs and alters our remembered pictures—that turned him into a hero, and his wife into a martyr, for whom henceforward, life, to be endurable, must be gently cushioned.

She made it easy and pleasant for herself by a constant succession of enthusiasms, which gave it a spice and a sensation of being for ever at its fullest best.

Fortunately there is a large stock of alternatives in this busy world of ours, and Mrs. Percy Popham, by a gift of quick selection and abandonment, kept her pulses at full throb, and knew nothing of the languor of a prolonged afternoon, from which so many vocationless women suffer.

She had rushed across to the Cookery School, and had scrubbed pots and pans with an energy which the good plain cook of our day—even she who does not demand a kitchen-maid—would have scorned to expend; and when she had driven her own staff of servants to the verge of mutiny by her zeal in the practice of side-dishes, she was suddenly bitten with a desire to emulate the fair embroideresses who patronised the rival school.

So from one pursuit to another, with the activity of a bee, if not exactly with the lightness of a butterfly, she passed, taking from each its honey.

Among her later enthusiasms had been that sometime popular one for all that belongs to Scotland. In the quaint solitudes of Lilliesmuir, she had found that which her soul craved. For the space of a brief summer she was all Scotch. She wore the tartan, though Lilliesmuir had no Celtic traditions, and she strove with more perseverance than success to acquire the native accent. There too, she found Tilly, a little rustic beauty, on whom to lavish many endearments, to pet, to praise, to prepare for a great future in London,

where rustic beauties are sometimes the fashion.

But—alas! for poor Tilly and Uncle Bob standing, the one in half-shivering excitement, the other in ill-concealed impatience below the shining lamp, while the stately footman bow their message upwards—that fancy, born with the summer, was already dead in this November season, dead and buried—who shall say how deep?—under newer inspirations.

Tilly drew a step nearer her uncle when they were left alone.

"It's very grand," she whispered. "Uncle Bob, have you ever seen any house like this?"

The hall was very grand, certainly. It had everything in it that a hall could have, and if it had a little the air of having been transported complete from Tottenham Court Road, it was nevertheless very imposing.

A dusky maiden in bronze held aloft the lamp that lit this splendour of inlaid work, of curtains, statuettes, mediæval armour, and flowers. To Tilly, used to the austerity of the Manse, this was opulence indeed—the vestibule to fairy-land. But, alas, for the mortals who wait on the threshold! Here comes the gorgeous footman with "no admission" writ large upon him.

"My mistress is very sorry," said he of the silken calves, "but a particular engagement prevents her seeing Miss Burton to-day. If Miss Burton will leave her address, Mrs. Popham will write to her."

The man gave his message without absolute disrespect. What were these two to him? A London servant can tell at a glance whether you are of the sacred set to which he ministers; and there is nothing finer, to a discriminating observer, than the nice adjustment of his behaviour to suit your rank.

The Janus who guarded Mrs. Percy Popham's door was used to letting in all sorts and conditions of men and women, and if he took Tilly and her uncle for but a new variation of the old pattern—the pensioners and hangers-on who wait on a fine lady's pleasure—he but judged as you and I might have judged, had we walked behind the pair, had we noticed the make of Uncle Bob's boots and the fashion of Tilly's frock.

But no disciple of psychology, no professor of legerdemain, no exponent of the latest craze, had ever turned upon John Thomas as Uncle Bob now turned.

"Look here, my man," he said, squaring

his broad shoulders, "ye needn't think ye can take me in. Bob Burton's not the fool ye seem to think him. What did the ledgy say?"

"She said she was very sorry she couldn't see the young lady to-day," the man repeated, infusing a little more respect into his tone. "She expects a visitor—a gentleman on business."

"Was that all?" Mr. Burton demanded in a voice that was ominously quiet. "Think a bit, my man. Was there no talk of spending the night, or of a meal, maybe—a bit of something hot, or even a cup of tea for the young lass, here?"

The man signified that there was no such talk.

"Uncle Bob, Uncle Bob, do come, dear!" cried Tilly, imploringly. "It is my fault. We can write——"

"Not with my will, lass."

"We can come again—another day—when Mrs. Popham is less busy."

"Come again!" Uncle Bob shook off her detaining hand almost roughly. "You and I will never darken this door again while I live to prevent it."

Then of a sudden his fierceness seemed to die out of him, and he said with a certain dignity, and an accent that grew in strength with his emotion:

"Tell your mistress from me that neither man nor beast—let alone a gentle young lass—would have been turned from my door without bite or sup, that had travelled four hundred miles on the strength of a great lady's friendship. Friendship! Heaven save us! The mair fule me to trust to sic a broken reed. Come awa, my bairn," he drew Tilly's arm within his own, "there's other doors in London that winna be steedit in our faces while there's the siller to pay for our meat and drink."

Tilly but too thankfully let herself be led out; but as they stood once more in the lamplight, and heard the door shut behind them, she put down her head on the rough sleeve to which she clung, and gave a little sob, half of relief, half of vexation.

Perhaps the next minute her light, girlish heart would have asserted itself, and she might have laughed, touched by the humorous side of this encounter; but Uncle Bob was in no laughing mood. In spite of his varied experiences, there was an odd and obstinate simplicity about the man that blinded him to the absurdity of his demands. In his own social world his wealth had made him a law to other men;

it had procured him hospitality wherever he chose to claim it; why should it fail him now? His personal egotism made it difficult for him to believe that all the world had not heard of Bob Burton's success. It says something for him, perhaps, that he found it almost equally difficult to believe that a real lady's word meant less than it seemed to mean. He was doubtful as to the realness of Mrs. Popham's ladyhood.

"Set her up! Ca' that a fine lady!" he growled under his breath. "I'se warrant if all were told, she's but a generation out of the dirt herself. When she came to Lilliesmuir, where did she bide?" he demanded, turning to the girl.

"In the Manse. The inn is not comfortable," she faltered. "You mind you didn't like it yourself, Uncle Bob; and then, you know Cousin Spencer is always hospitable. It is a pleasure to him to see new people."

"They wull give her the hale of the rooms?"

"She had the spare room."

"There was a woman-servant with her?"

"Yes, she had a maid."

"And where did they put her?"

"She had my room." Tilly hung her head. When Uncle Bob spoke in that tone she had to answer.

"And I warrant she didn't sup on kale or good meal porridge. You gave her bed and board—the best that you had; and when you come to London, she, that was always yammer-yammering for you to visit her, hasn't a minute to speir after your health. It's the way of the world, my lass, and I was a fool to expect it to mend its manners at this time of day. Well, there's an end of that business."

Tilly knew very well it was the end—the end of a great many fair hopes and dreams that she could not have put into words. For one brief moment she was disloyal to Uncle Bob. He might have managed better; he might have been more patient, less exacting. Tilly would have left an address; would have gone again quite humbly, had she followed her own inclinations, which were all for peace.

They went a little way in silence up the dark and empty street, walking away from all their hopes, as it seemed. Of a sudden, Tilly felt weary; her feet lagged and her head drooped; and big London seemed no more a land of enchantments, but a great, weary desert, where they two might wander, homeless and unfriended.

But all at once the downward flutter of her spirits was arrested by Uncle Bob's new behaviour. Uncle Bob was now majestic, dignified; the roughness of his Scotch speech deserted him.

"There's hospitality to be got yet for those that can pay for it," he said, and he hailed a passing cab. "Take us to the best hotel in London," he said to the driver. "The one where they give you a good show for your money, and plenty to eat and drink, d'ye hear?"

The cabman nodded. London cabmen are used to eccentricity in their fares; perhaps that is why nothing ever surprises them. They are quick to read character, too, and in Uncle Bob's eye there lurked the promise of an extra fare.

"All right," he said, "you trust to me, gov'nor, I knows the right shop for you."

Tilly got in, nothing loth. The wilderness lost some of its terrors since one had not to tread its weary lengths, and who could tell what new adventures might not be lurking for them at the other side? And while they rattled cheerfully over the way Uncle Bob drew the little girl kindly to his side, with one protecting arm holding her close.

"Cheer up, my bonnie birdie," he said, "there's as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it."

Tilly saw nothing at all as she rested her head on the shaggy shoulders; she had given up wishing or caring, and the pictures Uncle Bob drew of the gowns and jewels, the golden chairs and marble halls that money could and should buy for her, passed through her brain as visions set to a chiming music which grew into a pleasant murmur. Was it Uncle Bob's voice that fell so soft and low that she could scarcely hear it above the rolling wheels? And presently the dancing gas-lights faded and went out, and Tilly was no more in London, but was wandering among the silent folds of hills whose sides autumn painted in sere reds and golds, and in her hand was a sprig of late blooming white heather.

But this time it was Uncle Bob's voice without question, and it was saying:

"The bairn's been sleeping! Waken up, my dove; here we are. This is better than my lady's, Tilly lass!"

She sat up confused and dazed, with but one conscious thought.

"I've lost my white heather, Uncle Bob—the heather that was to bring us luck!"

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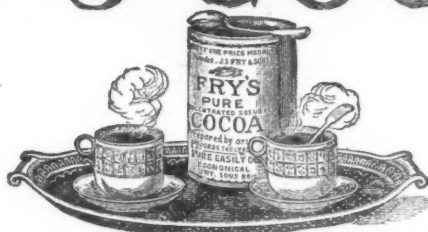
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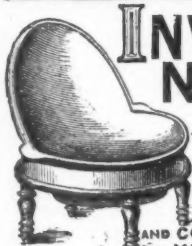
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